

CULINARY APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a culinary apparatus and more particularly to
5 an apparatus for holding an edible item to facilitate submersion of the item into a vessel
containing a liquid while permitting communication of the liquid with the item.

2. Description of the Related Art

While partaking in the consumption of an edible item, particularly, for
10 example, a pastry item, and more particularly, a cookie, it often becomes desirable to
submerge the item to moisten or at least partially saturate the item to enhance its
consumption. However, as most can attest, this maneuver often results in the pastry item
becoming overly saturated where the consistency of the item is degraded to a point of
crumbling. In addition, and equally as troubling, is the residue of item material which
15 inevitably migrates to the consumer's fingers and hands.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, the present disclosure is directed to a culinary apparatus and
associated method for facilitating at least partial submersion of an edible item within a vessel
20 containing a liquid. Generally stated, the preferred apparatus for holding a pastry item,
includes a container member for at least partially containing a pastry item. The container
member is dimensioned and configured for insertion into a vessel containing a liquid therein.
The container member includes at least one support surface and has at least one aperture

extending through the one support surface, whereupon at least partial insertion of the container member within the vessel, the liquid passes through the one aperture to contact the pastry item contained therein. The apparatus may also includes a handle member depending from the container member. The handle member is dimensioned for grasping engagement by
5 the user to facilitate insertion and manipulation of the container member within the vessel.

The preferred container member includes first and second opposed support surfaces with the support surfaces arranged to support the pastry item therebetween. The first support surface may be adapted for movement relative to the second support surface between
10 a first open position to facilitate positioning of the pastry item at least partially between the support surfaces and a second approximated position where the pastry item is supported between the support surfaces. The handle member includes a movable member operatively connected to the first support element and is movable to effect movement of the first support element between first and second positions.

15 The container member may include an enclosure member which defines a cavity for reception of the pastry item. The enclosure member is dimensioned to accommodate a cookie.

A method for dunking a pastry item within a vessel containing a fluid therein is also disclosed. The method includes the steps of:
20 providing a pastry holder including opposed support elements arranged to support a pastry therebetween, at least one support element including an aperture therein;
positioning a pastry item between the opposed support elements whereby the pastry item is contained within the pastry holder; and

inserting the pastry holder within the vessel to at least partially submerge the pastry item in the fluid whereby the fluid passes through the aperture to contact the pastry item.

5 Preferably, the pastry item is a cookie whereby the step of inserting includes submerging at least a portion of the cookie in the fluid of the vessel.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Preferred embodiments of the present invention will be readily appreciated
10 from the foregoing discussion with reference to the drawings wherein:
FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the culinary apparatus of the present disclosure;
FIG. 2 is a side plan view of the culinary apparatus in an open position;
FIG. 3 is a side plan view of the culinary apparatus in a closed position; and
FIG. 4 is a view illustrating submersion of the culinary apparatus within a
15 vessel containing a liquid.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is directed to a culinary apparatus facilitating the submersion, i.e., at least partial submersion, of an edible item within the consumable liquid.
20 The apparatus may be used with any edible item contemplated for submersion within a moistening element. Such edible items include bread, crackers, pasta, etc., and preferably include pastry items such as donuts, cakes, muffins, etc. The apparatus has particular application in use with submerging or dunking a cookie item within a beverage such as coffee, tea, milk or soda and will be described in connection with this use in the remaining
25 discussion.

For the following discussion, the term proximal as is traditional will refer to the portion of the apparatus closest to the operator while the term distal will refer to the portion of the instrument most remote from the operator.

5 Referring now to FIG. 1, there is illustrated in perspective view the apparatus of the present invention. Culinary apparatus 10 includes handle 12 defining longitudinal axis “a” and holder 14 disposed distal of the handle. Handle 12 includes first and second handle elements 16, 18 pivotally connected to each other about pivot pin 20. Handle element 16, 18 are adapted for pivotal total movement between an open position depicted in FIG. 2 and a
10 closed position depicted in FIG. 3 to control respective opening and closing movement of holder 14. Although shown in this embodiment as two pivoting elements, it is envisioned that handle 12 may include a stationary handle element and a moveable handle element connected to each other through the aforementioned pivotal means or with the use of a camming pin/slot arrangement. Other handle mechanisms are also envisioned. First and
15 second handle elements 16, 18 also include looped segments 22, 24 for receiving the fingers of the consumer to assist in manipulation of the apparatus 10.

With continued reference to FIGS. 1-3, holder 14 includes first and second containers 26, 28 connected to respective handle elements 16, 18. In a preferred embodiment,
20 first and second containers 26, 28 are fixedly secured to handle elements 16, 18. Alternatively, first and second containers 26, 28 may be mounted for rotational movement relative to the handle elements 16, 18. One skilled in the art may readily adapt containers 26, 28 for such relative movement.

Each container 26, 28 includes longitudinal (horizontal) support surfaces 30, 32 and transverse wall 34, 36 depending from the surfaces 30, 32. Surfaces 30, 32 define a plurality of apertures 38 extending completely through the wall for permitting passage of a fluid through the surfaces. Transverse walls 34, 36 each extend along the periphery of their respective containers 26, 28. Transverse walls 26, 28 may also include apertures 40 to permit passage of fluid or optimally be devoid of the apertures.

Apparatus 10 may be fabricated from any suitable generally rigid material including stainless steel, silver, or a polymeric material and/or a combination of these materials. Preferably, the materials of fabrication chosen may be readily cleaned by hand or a dishwashing unit.

In use, a cookie "K" is selected and positioned between the open containers 26, 28 as shown in FIG. 2. Handle elements 16, 18 are then moved toward each other to effect closure of the containers 26, 28 as depicted in FIG. 3. In this position, containers 26, 28 define a bonded internal cavity for reception and support of the cookie "K". Once in the closed position, holder 14 is at least partially submerged or dunked within a vessel "V" containing a liquid "L". The liquid "L" communicates through apertures 38, 40 of containers 26, 28 to moisten and/or at least partially saturate the cookie "K". After a defined period, the apparatus 10 is removed from the liquid "L", containers 26, 28 are moved to their open position of FIG. 2 and the cookie "K" removed for consumption.

It will be understood that various modifications may be made to the embodiments disclosure herein. Therefore, the above description should not be construed as

limiting, but merely as exemplifications of preferred embodiments. For example, it is envisioned that each of the support surfaces 30, 32 of containers 26, 28 may include only one opening. Alternatively only one container may have an opening with the other container having a solid support surface. Similarly only one container may be provided with a
5 transverse wall while the other container is disc-shaped devoid of the wall. Containers 26, 28 may take various shapes and forms for example to accommodate the various configurations of commercially available cookies, including, oval-shaped, round, rectangular, disc-shaped, square etc... Those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope and spirit of the claims appended hereto.